

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

workers.org

FEB. 26, 2009

VOL. 51, NO. 8

50¢

Stimulus package— why workers need more

By Fred Goldstein

Mass protests against the global economic crisis are spreading.

Protests recently toppled the government of Iceland. There have been militant protests against unemployment in Greece, Chile, Latvia and Bulgaria. A general strike in France on Jan. 29 compelled the government to give money to the automaker Citroën in return for a promise not to lay off workers.

As the crisis deepens in the United States, the multinational working class, unions, community organizations, students and youth must not be lulled into inactivity waiting for the \$787 billion stimulus package, signed on Feb. 17, to take effect.

It is understandable that millions of workers who voted for Barack Obama are anxiously hoping that the legislation will bring them some assistance and relief from the dire economic circumstances they face. Some are unemployed and running out of benefits. Others, particularly public workers, are in danger of losing their jobs and health care.

In addition to the millions of unemployed workers and the people who have lost their homes, there are millions more who were impoverished even before the crisis and are hoping that the stimulus package will help them.

What workers get directly

Many features of the package are aimed at immediate relief. They are the very measures the Republicans focused on trying to cut back, evoking the rightful outrage of workers and all progressives.

Among many other provisions, the final

bill stipulates \$40 billion for extended unemployment benefits through Dec. 31, 2009. It increases these benefits by \$25 a week and funds job training. It sets aside \$20 billion to increase food stamp benefits by 14 percent. It includes \$3 billion in temporary welfare payments and \$14 billion for a one-time \$250 payment to Social Security recipients, people on Supplemental Security Income, and veterans receiving disability and pensions. (USAToday.com)

There is aid to students, to workers who have lost their health care, to states to keep their sinking budgets from going completely under, and other measures that, altogether, are supposed to create 3.5 million jobs.

The bill is designed to entice states into expanding their unemployment benefits to include part-time workers, workers who have been forced to leave the job for family reasons, and workers who are in training.

Better than nothing—but still a pittance

Of course, any increase in assistance to workers is better than no increase at all. When you are unemployed or falling into poverty, every dollar counts. The workers are in desperate need and should take everything they can get.

But considering that the working class has created all the wealth of this society in goods and services yet now is living with a huge deficit, the workers are entitled to a lot more than the paltry sums being talked about.

According to government statistics, the unemployment rate went up to 7.6 percent in January. It is expected to continue

growing for the foreseeable future, certainly for the rest of 2009 and into 2010.

A rate of 7.6 percent means 11.5 million jobless workers. Let's assume that the annual wage of these workers was \$40,000—which is a little less than the average wage and represents mere survival for a family of four.

If the jobless rate remains at the present level for the next year, the officially unemployed will have lost \$460 billion in wages. This does not include the millions who are unemployed but not counted because they have given up looking for work. Add them in and the figure rises to \$500 billion.

It is important to note that "total unemployment"—an official government figure that also includes those estimated to have dropped out of the workforce from discouragement about finding a job and those forced into part-time work—is actually 13.9 percent. At that rate, more than 20 million people are unemployed or underemployed. Of those, only 4.8 million are receiving unemployment benefits from the states and 1.7 million are receiving federal special supplementary benefits.

That means that 14 million unemployed or underemployed get no unemployment insurance.

Bankers get lion's share

The situation is only going to get worse. The number of unemployed is far surpassing the limited plans for job creation. For the first time since 1939, the number of unemployed has grown by more than half a million per month for three months in a row. While the stimulus package is

Continued on page 6

BOYCOTT ISRAEL!

Hampshire College divests

Worldwide movement grows

South African solidarity 9

WORKERS FIGHTBACK

Caribbean strikes 11

Waterford Crystal sit-in 7

Republic workers
tour Midwest 4

UNJUST SYSTEM MUST GO

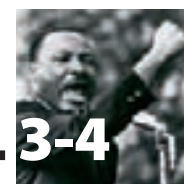
Youth, judges & profits

Jailed immigrants rebel

Philadelphia cop scandal 3

ALL OUT ON APRIL 3-4

Bail Out People,
Not Wall Street



5, 6, 7



Subscribe to Workers World

☐ Eight weeks trial: \$4 ☐ One year: \$25 www.workers.org

NAME _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

WORKERS WORLD 55 W. 17 St., 5 FL., NY, NY 10011 212-627-2994

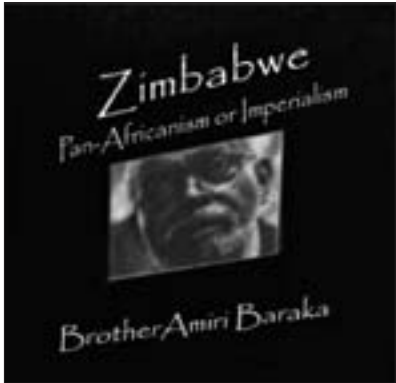
People's victory in Venezuela Editorial 10

On Feb. 15, Venezuelans lined up at the polls to vote "sí" or "no" on term limits for elected officials including President Hugo Chávez, and the people have spoken. Nearly 55 percent of the voters decided in favor of having indefinite term limits. The struggle amongst the Venezuelan people for a socialist revolution has far from died as the media would have you believe. This vote, as said President Chávez, "was a vote for socialism." Above, thousands of people celebrate in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas following the vote.

—Report & photo by Lila Goldstein

Voices from Harlem forum on Zimbabwe

The following excerpts are from talks presented at a Feb. 8 “Zimbabwe: Pan Africanism or Imperialism” forum in Harlem, N.Y. The forum was organized by the December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe. Go to www.workers.org to read the talks in their entirety.



Amiri Baraka, playwright and poet

How can any Black or anybody who lived through colonialism ever accept anything Britain and the U.S. or any of the European imperialist nations have to say about Africa? How can someone who stole your land and then got put off it, ask for reparations like a thief who steals your wallet and wants you to pay them when you force them to give it back? No matter what is happening in Zimbabwe, Britain and the U.S. must not have anything to say about it. There are criminal charges still pending against them for colonialism, even for slavery. The best they can do is submit to just claims for reparations and hope nobody asks for prison terms. How is it that the greatest murderers and thieves in the world keep getting off without even a dime of reparations, then have the nerve to say that the oppressed peoples, once freed from straight out colonialism, owe them something?



Dr. James McIntosh, Monica Moorehead, Chaka Cousins, Atty. Malik Zulu Shabazz and Professor Molefi Kete Asante

Dr. James McIntosh, Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People

In Zimbabwe, children die for lack of an asthma pump, clean water or IV solution to replace fluids lost from cholera or some other cause of diarrhea. When we realize that under sanctions, shipments of chlorine gas necessary for water purification are blocked, when we realize that under sanctions aircraft parts necessary to repair crop dusters to grow the grain necessary to stop malnutrition are blocked, then we recognize that the imposition of economic sanctions on a developing nation like Zimbabwe is not an alternative to war, but such imposition is itself a weapon of war. Like weapons or even war itself, these sanctions have historically been used for the same purposes. In Zimbabwe the purpose has been to attempt regime change. The first sanctions were the unofficial sanctions in the form of the refusal of credit to Zimbabwe by the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and others. These undeclared and unofficial sanctions were sparked by the reclaiming of the land by the Zimbabwean people. Mugabe, like Malcolm X, recognized that land is the basis of all revolution and that the Zimbabwe revolution must be no dif-



ferent. The response of imperialism to land reclamation is always war.

Monica Moorehead, International Action Center

Historically, sectors of the U.S. left movement have been weak in carrying out a consistent, anti-imperialist perspective, especially where imperialism’s interests are the most profound. Therefore, struggles especially in Africa and the Middle East face the most intense political isolation due to racism, chauvinism and social-patriotism, rooted in the ideology of the capitalist ruling class. The movement must explain in popular language to the workers and oppressed in the U.S. that the Wall Street bosses and bankers that are stealing their homes, their apartments, their jobs, their education, their health care—if they even have health care—weakening their unions; that benefit from the divide-and-conquer ideology of racism, including from police brutality to incarcerations to deportations and much more, are the same forces imposing endless economic and military wars and occupations abroad. Our enemy is the same here and worldwide—capitalism and imperialism, not the people of Zimbabwe, Palestine and elsewhere, who are on the front lines in the war for national liberation to get imperialism off their backs. The most effective way to build international solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe is to weaken imperialism at home with the building of an independent, fightback movement to demand real change, which translates into a revolutionary transformation of society that will put human needs before capitalist greed.

Chaka Cousins, All-African People’s Revolutionary Party

The struggle that is being played out in Zimbabwe is not just about Zimbabwe. It is a link in the chain of struggle against slavery, against colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism and imperialism. This struggle will show clearly the forces that are for genuinely fighting for true independence and the forces that seek only to collaborate with imperialism. Imperialism has declared war against Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean masses because they dare to struggle for genuine independence. The sanctions against Zimbabwe are in fact a maneuver of the neocolonialists. The imperialists can no longer rule directly, so instead they seek to rule through economic control and through puppet leaders.

We are currently witnessing the fall of capitalism. Every day we read about some type of pyramid scheme where the person at the top has stolen the money of those at the bottom. This is precisely how capitalism exploits the masses. Those who don’t labor reap and plunder the resources of those who do labor. This system is bound to fail because it is an unjust system, it is an oppressive system, and wherever there is oppression, there will always be resistance.

—Report & photo by Monica Moorehead



Professor Molefi Kete Asante, author of “The History of Africa,” and a trainer of journalists in Zimbabwe during the first year of the country’s independence.

The condition of the Black people in Zimbabwe before the Second Chimurenga [armed struggle] was near slavery. Whites had managed to segregate the country much like South Africa. The wages of the African population averaged about 10 dollars a month, while the whites made 600 dollars a month. It was once reported that the whites in Rhodesia had the highest standard of living in the world. When Mugabe’s government began to take the lands and redistribute them to the people, sometimes to the people who had been working the farms for decades anyway, because the land belonged to their ancestors, the reactionaries started a military resistance by arming themselves and some of their collaborators to fight the government. His decision was historic because it was in the interest of the masses of the people. They had to take back the land. They also knew that the white farmers, some who owned 60,000 acres, were producing not food crops, but cash crops to make themselves rich. Who eats tobacco and cotton? Yes, there was maize but most of it was for export anyway. The condition of the people was pitiful in their own land. They were compelled to call for redress. What people would stand by and allow such a small minority to dominate their lives?

Atty. Malik Zulu Shabazz, New Black Panther Party

Today, Britain and America have determined that they will rule Africa through virtual, digital, high speed, automatic remote control, using African leaders that are pre-stamped, pre-qualified and pre-ordained to be good stool pigeons for the West and Western neocolonialism under the guise of “responsible and good governance.” Any leader like Robert Mugabe who stands up for justice and righting the wrongs or for reparations is lied upon, slandered, attacked, vilified and his people are made to pay the price through economic and diplomatic sanctions, which are weapons of war by other labels. These are the policies of George W. Bush. These are the policies of Prime Minister Tony Blair. Now, history has vanquished these two men, the people have removed them and cast them off into the dustbin of arrogant rulers who disregarded the rights of smaller nations. The people, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow and White, have removed these two arrogant ones as a sign that their ideas and policies are morally bankrupt and repugnant to the universal ideas of mutual cooperation amongst nations and peoples. With the removal of Bush and Blair, so too must come the removal and dismantling of their policies and ideals, and indeed a change must come. □

‘Hands Off Zimbabwe’



The same day that a unity government took office in Zimbabwe, Feb. 13, opponents of Western colonialism protested before the British and U.S. missions to the United Nations in New York City demanding an end to the economic sanctions imposed on this southern African country and the right to self-determination. The December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe called this action. Speakers at a rally outside the U.S. Mission included D12’s Omowale Clay and Sara Flounders from the International Action Center.

Imperialist sanctions have crippled Zimbabwe’s economy for almost a decade, ever since the African masses instituted a radical land reform policy of taking back their lands illegally stolen by white farmers. These earlier land thefts date back to the days of British colonialism, starting in the late 19th century. Once Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe backed this grassroots land reform program, the imperialists demonized him with a vengeance.

Mugabe, a leader of the ZANU-PF party coordinating Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, was prime minister from 1980 to 1987, and president since then. Now the ZANU-PF is sharing political power with two opposition parties that are backed by the U.S. and Britain.

One of these parties, the Movement for Democratic Change, nominated their treasurer general, wealthy white farmer Roy Bennett, whose vast land holdings had been seized by Zimbabwe’s people, for deputy agriculture minister. When Bennett arrived in Harare Feb. 13, he was arrested and charged for his role in an earlier plot to overthrow President Mugabe. The continuing international sanctions against Zimbabwe and the role of people like Bennett in the opposition to Mugabe indicate once again that Zimbabwe’s quest for sovereignty and true independence is far from being over.

